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## Second Harvest Heartland

### Testimony: Newell Searle

Second Harvest Heartland is the largest of Minnesota's six food banks that supply donated grocery products to food shelves and emergency food programs. Our mission is to "end hunger through community partnerships."

From Federal and state census and program data, we estimate that ending hunger required 125 million meals each year to close the "gap" for Minnesotans living at or below 185% of poverty. Providing 125 million more meals includes increasing distribution of donated food as well as maximizing participation in Federal nutrition programs.

ARRA provided additional funding for two programs that Second Harvest Heartland is engaged in: distribution of USDA commodities ("TEFAP") and SNAP ("food stamps").

TEFAP is a USDA entitlement program authorized by the "Farm Bill." It provides fresh and processed foods for distribution to low-income citizens through qualified charitable

organizations. This is among the most nutritious foods we distribute and it is a vital complement to the shelf-stable products donated by food manufacturers and others.

In 2009, Minnesota's food banks received and distributed 1.370 million pounds of TEFAP of which about 370 thousand pounds were provided by ARRA. This additional food plus the increased TEFAP provided by the 2008 Farm Bill has helped food banks and food shelves to serve the increased number of people seeking food assistance. Our 2009 distribution plan was to secure and distribute 45 million pounds of food products. The additional TEFAP from ARRA will contribute to exceeding our distribution goal by several million pounds.

SNAP is the largest and potentially most effective, long-term and sustainable anti-hunger program. SNAP participation in Minnesota currently lags the national average and the participation in nearby states. Although not driven by ARRA funds, we are hiring SNAP outreach workers in the east and west Metro areas as well as greater Minnesota. We are also working with food shelves, CAP agencies and other organizations to conduct outreach and assist eligible Minnesotans to secure SNAP benefits.

Looking ahead, we will be working to secure support for enhanced programs in the reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act, which includes school breakfast and lunch, WIC and the Summer Food Program.

